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RECEIVED**NOV 09 2007****Ravalli County Commissioners**

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Ravalli County Board of County Commissioners
215 S 4th Street, Suite F
Hamilton, MT 59840

Dear Commissioners:

I write this letter to you to express my support for the revised October 2007 Lost Horse Quarry Operating and Reclamation Plan submitted by the Ravalli County Road and Bridge Department relative to proposed operations at Lost Horse quarry.

As you are aware, I have owned Lost Horse Creek Lodge for 12 years. Coincidentally, 12 years ago in 1996, at a cost of 2.5 million dollars the State of Montana commissioned, through the Governor's office, Department of Commerce and Promotion Division (Travel Montana) a study to develop a strategic plan for tourism and recreation. That plan has now been finished and set forth in the form of the now published "Montana Tourism and Recreation Strategic Plan 2008-2012" in final draft form as of September 2007. The Plan is specifically prepared for Montana's Tourism and Recreation Partnership Stakeholders. By definition every governmental agency, business, land owner, service industry, tribe, investor, citizen and agency is a "STAKEHOLDER."

The Strategic Framework for the interaction of "stakeholders" is set forth in the plan. Tourism is a low impact 3 billion+ industry for Montana. The economic well being of the citizens of Montana, not the least of whom are your constituents, is critically impacted by tourism dollars. The national forest land belongs to the people and they have a right to access it. Lost Horse road is a vital link to the wilderness area and Lost Horse Quarry is public forest service land containing an asset that affords an opportunity for governmental cooperation and action by the county and forest service to further Strategic Plan Goal 7.3 (pg.41) to "Improve Montana roads and bridges..." thereby improving Montana's transportation system for residents and visitors.

Currently, Montana Tourism and Recreation facilities are significantly under-utilized. The under-utilization creates instability in the tourism industry's revenues and jobs and affects every other sector of Montana's economy as well. It has been determined that Montana had 4.6 million vacant room nights in 2006 and that if those rooms had been filled, an additional 309 million dollars in revenue would have been generated, including 21.7 million dollars in lodging taxes (Strategic Plan Purpose and Process p. 3).

October 26, 2007

Ravalli County Board of County Commissioners

Page - 2

Even opponents of the County Operating and Reclamation Plan agree that Lost Horse Quarry is now a Mecca for rock climbers and other outdoor enthusiasts as well. It is obvious that all agree to the immediate need to improve Lost Horse Road through "Stakeholder" cooperation. Lost Horse Road is the primary gateway for the public to access the wilderness. It is not the private road way of opponents of the county plan. With the recent ribbon cutting to the GSK 137,000,000.00 facility, we can expect as Hamilton mayor Jessica Randazzo correctly stated :

"Hamilton, Montana is a little dot on the map. However, GSK is making it possible for Hamilton to become a big dot on the map, as Hamilton is now contributing to a global impact. We welcome this explosion to our entire local economy and thank GSK for bringing valuable members to our community."

I have served for 8 years on the Yamhill County Budget Committee in McMinnville, Oregon. I have also served as the chairman of the Willamette Valley Medical Center board of directors for 16 years. As a practicing lawyer for 36 years, I have represented 65 Oregon school districts. With that experience, I am familiar with the costing of public projects. I have reviewed the revised October 2007 plan and the proposed action it contemplates. It is a sound plan. It is in keeping with the goals of the strategic plan. It will foster "Stakeholder" collaboration. Most importantly, it is the right thing to do. I wish I could be there to address you personally, however Connie Woods, managing owner of Lost Horse Creek Lodge, is there to present this communication to you for your consideration as well as to add her considerable acumen and insight as to the issues.

My compliments to your outstanding County Road Supervisor, David H. Ohnstad, who from my experience in county government, is also recognized in Oregon as an exceptionally qualified administrator. The County is fortunate to have his talent and loyalty. I define "loyalty" as "never letting the people you work for or with make a mistake."

I would also like to comment as a Ravalli County and Montana State tax payer, that the criticism of Mr. Ohnstadt's work that I have read is not credible and should have first been considered by the board in a work session including input from the road department. From my many years as a lawyer representing public entities I have found that "Blind Siding" employees in open meetings to play to particular interest groups is wrong, particularly where the criticism is without adequate foundation and process. Such action can raise legal issues which could subject the governmental entity to law suits costing tax payer monies that could otherwise be used to develop infrastructure and provide jobs through united action.

Very Truly Yours and united in keeping Montana a beautiful experience for all,



Robert M. Johnstone, Owner
Lost Horse Creek Lodge